

DECEMBER 2021

*The Homeless Programs Office (HPO) newsletter contains news and information about VA's ongoing effort to prevent and end homelessness among Veterans.*



## Executive Director's Message | Around HPO

### COVID-19 Response | Staff Spotlight | Fact of the Month

*Veterans who are homeless or at imminent risk of homelessness are strongly encouraged to contact the [National Call Center for Homeless Veterans](#) at (877) 4AID-VET (877-424-3838) for assistance.*

## Message From Monica Diaz, Executive Director, VHA Homeless Programs Office



As 2021 concludes, the past year, unfortunately, did not provide the full restoration of normalcy many of us hoped it would. As we approach the second anniversary of the pandemic's onset, I want to acknowledge the nearly 800,000 Americans who are no longer with us because of the virus. To those who are faced with their first, or second, holiday season missing a family member or friend lost to COVID-19, my heart is with you.

The pandemic has taught us a lot, but perhaps the most important lesson is with the great responsibility to take care

of one other. Indeed, my fondest memories of this year have been when I have witnessed such concern for humanity, kindness, and generosity of spirit while serving alongside each public servant in the U.S. Department of Veteran's Affairs (VA) Homeless Programs Office (HPO), as well as collaborating with our partners in the government and private sectors.

[Read Monica's full message.](#)

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## Around HPO

### [VA Partnership with The Green Chair Project Provides Newly Housed Veterans with Household Necessities](#)

Unfortunately, too many Veterans exit homelessness with little-to-no furnishings or funds to obtain such essential items when moving into their new home. In response, a partnership was formed between the Durham VA Medical Center and [The Green Chair Project](#) to provide items to furnish homes and allows Veterans to be self-sustainable, independent, and proud of where they live. The collaboration was featured in this year's VHA National Community Partnership Challenge for the ability to adapt in a changing world. Read the full blog [here](#).



### [HUD-VASH Success Story](#)

During the June 2021 heatwave that struck the Pacific Northwest, Army Veteran and HUD-VASH participant Ronald Probst apartment thermostat read 120°F. He didn't have air conditioning and he had heard about neighbors passing out and being sent to the hospital. He began to fear for his safety. Probst's Case Manager, Christine Eddy, called to check on him and let him know that, thanks to a new but time-limited authority, VA now had the ability to buy him an air conditioning unit. [Read the full story](#) on Probst and his journey navigating VA housing benefits and services.

### [Tribal HUD-VASH Expansion Opportunity](#)

The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development's (HUD) Office of Native American Programs (ONAP) has published a Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO) announcing the availability of approximately \$2.2 million for competitive grants to eligible Indian tribes and tribally designated housing entities. This is an exciting opportunity to fund rental assistance for Native American Veterans who have answered our Nation's calls to serve and are homeless or at risk of



homelessness. The current application deadline is January 18, 2022. To see the full NOFO, click [here](#).



### [\*\*Funding Opportunity Under Supportive Services for Veteran Families \(SSVF\) Program\*\*](#)

VA has announced a NOFO for supportive services grants under the SSVF Program. The NOFO includes information on the program, the application process, and the maximum award amount available by location.

Applications must be received by the SSVF Program Office by 4:00 PM EST on February 7, 2022. For more information, [click here](#).

### [\*\*VA Accesses Resources to Increase Housing Assistance for Vulnerable Veterans\*\*](#)

VA recently updated its SSVF Program to increase subsidies for Veteran housing in high-cost rental markets and the cap in housing assistance available to Veteran families. Under the new regulations, in certain communities, the SSVF grant will cover up to 50%, an increase from 35% of eligible Veterans' reasonable rent for two years without need for recertification. The new rule also expands the maximum stay in emergency housing for unsheltered Veterans. For more information, [read our press release](#).



### [\*\*VA Designates Flexible Funding to Support Homeless Veterans During the COVID-19 Public Health Emergency\*\*](#)

Section 4201(a) of the Johnny Isakson and David P. Roe, M.D. Veterans Health Care and Benefits Improvement Act of 2020 (PL 116-315) has authorized the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to use appropriated funds for life-saving goods and services for homeless Veterans or those participating in the HUD-VASH program during the Coronavirus pandemic and other covered public health emergencies. This time-limited authority has allowed VA medical centers to purchase groceries, meals, apartment start-up kits, furniture, Goodwill merchandise vouchers, laundry vouchers, and more for Veterans experiencing homelessness. Learn more about this life-saving authorization [here](#).

### [\*\*HUD-VASH Vouchers Awarded to Public Housing Agencies Nationwide\*\*](#)

HUD has awarded more than \$18 million in HUD-VASH vouchers to 103 Public Housing Agencies in 33 states across the country to support Veterans experiencing homelessness. This round of allocations will support 2,050 HUD-VASH vouchers nationally, bringing the total number of current vouchers to 106,704. Read the press release [here](#).





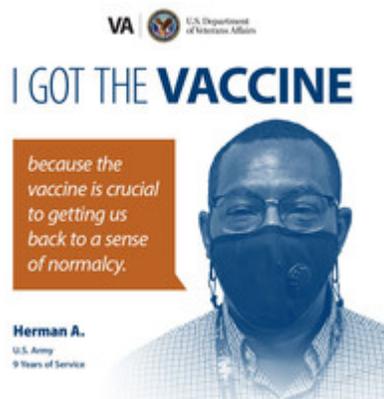
## ICYMI: Bombas Facts

Homeless Veterans across the country experience harmful weather conditions throughout the winter and clothing items, like socks, are important commodities. The California-based clothing company Bombas has supported homeless Veterans across the country this year by donating nearly 40,000 pairs of socks to VA, and 10,000 to Grant Per Diem (GDP) and SSVF grantees. Their mission is to support homeless individuals and encourage public awareness surrounding under-represented issues in the United States.

Bombas has already donated over 50 million items around the world, and as the company continues to grow, the brand's One Purchase = One Donated program will grow along with it.

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## HPO COVID-19 Response and Updates



VA adheres to all COVID-19 guidelines supported by the Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), which is working with state and local public health officials to monitor the spread of the [Omicron Variant](#) in the United States.

It is important now more than ever to follow CDC masking and travel guidelines to prevent the spread of this variant. Protect your loved ones this holiday season by visiting your [local VA health facility](#) to receive a COVID-19 vaccine and/or booster shot.

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## HPO Staff Spotlight: Michael J. Arinello

Retired Army Colonel Michael J. Arinello, MPM, MSS, has been working as a Vocational Development Specialist (VDS) in the Southern Arizona VA Health Care System for 6 years. Prior to joining VA, Arinello served 30 years in the military, as well as worked as a defense contractor.

Arinello now helps provide direct employment services to Veterans, such as helping with resume preparation, assistance with completion and submission of job applications, and interview skills training. Alongside another VDS and his Community Employment Coordinator, Arinello developed a partnership with the local community workforce connection agency. In FY 2021, Arinello and his team helped achieve



70% of employable Veterans in HUD-VASH obtaining employment, the second-highest score in the Southwest region.

[Click here](#) to learn more about his incredible work.

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## HPO Fact of the Month



Holiday seasons offer us important reminders about how critical it is to have a safe and stable place to call home. Since 2010, over 920,000 Veterans and their family members have been placed into permanent housing or were prevented from falling into homelessness through VA's homeless programs and services.

Want to help us get to 1,000,000? Visit our [How You Can Help](#) page to learn more about how to get involved.